

Letters to the Editor

## The tendency of suicide among the elderly in Mie Prefecture, Japan

*To the editor,*

The aim of the present study is to show the causative factors of suicide among the elderly (over 65) in Mie Prefecture, Japan, and we discuss the prevention of the suicidal factors among elderly group.

We investigated all inquest records during the 13-year-period 1990–2002 in cooperation with the First Department of Criminal Investigation of Mie Prefectural Police Headquarters. From all cases classified as suicides, we extracted data on age, sex, and backgrounds, and we focused suicide in the elderly group.

During the test period, the numbers of suicides were 4721 suicides (3074 male and 1647 female suicides) in which the numbers of suicides in the elderly group were 1405 suicides (641 male and 764 female suicides). The rate of suicides in the elderly group was approximately 29.8% of the total in all age groups. Especially, the rate of suicides in the elderly group among the women was approximately 46.4%.

In causative factors and medical history as background among elderly group, the major causative factor of suicide was “suffering from physical illness” (45.6%). “Physical diseases” were not negligible backgrounds in the elderly group. In physical diseases, the number of malignant neoplasm (7.5%) was clearly less than the other diseases (92.5%). Notably, “cardiovascular disease” (27.0%) and “orthopedic disorder” (17.1%) were most frequent causative factors of suicide other than malignant neoplasm.

It is consequently concluded that improvements in the system of home nursing and health care should be involved in the suicidal prevention of the elderly who “suffer from physical illness”. In addition, the elderly patients who “suffer from physical illness” should be given physical and mental support.

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